

A SYNTHESIS OF SILVER GENERATION PASSENGER BEHAVIOR IN AIRLINE SELECTION: IMPLICATIONS FOR AIRLINE MARKETING AND SERVICE DESIGN

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Abstract

This study synthesizes research on silver generation passenger behavior in airline selection, with implications for airline marketing and service design. The objectives are to (1) analyze research methodologies, (2) examine key variables, and (3) identify research gaps. A total of 18 relevant studies were reviewed, and the findings were summarized in tables to present methodological approaches and commonly used variables. The results show that most studies employed quantitative methods, particularly questionnaire-based surveys with convenience sampling, focusing mainly on general airline passengers. In contrast, qualitative approaches were limited and primarily based on document analysis and secondary data. The literature largely emphasizes service quality, satisfaction, and behavioral intention, while financial and psychological factors remain underexplored. In addition, studies focusing specifically on elderly passengers are relatively scarce. These findings suggest the need for future research to better understand silver generation passengers in order to enhance airline marketing and service design strategies.

Keywords: *Silver generation, airline selection, research synthesis*

Introduction

Research synthesis is a systematic process of reviewing existing studies in order to identify research methodologies, key variables, and gaps in the literature (Kitchenham, 2004; Tranfield et al., 2003). It plays a crucial role in the early stage of research by providing a comprehensive understanding of what has been studied and what remains unexplored. Through this process, researchers can avoid duplication and build upon existing knowledge to develop more meaningful and original contributions (Tranfield et al., 2003). Moreover, research synthesis is not limited to well-established topics but is also valuable for emerging or underexplored areas, as it helps uncover overlooked issues and potential research gaps (Kitchenham, 2004).

In the aviation context, research on silver generation passengers remains relatively limited. Previous studies have noted that accessibility and inclusivity are essential components of travel experiences, particularly for elderly passengers (Darcy & Dickson, 2009). However, collecting data from this group has traditionally been challenging due to limitations in survey accessibility and response reliability. In recent years, demographic and social changes have significantly increased the importance of this segment. The silver generation has grown in size, with higher education levels, more available time after retirement, and greater financial

capacity, making them a promising customer group for the aviation industry (World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2016; Kim et al., 2015). In addition, recent global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic have further reshaped travel behavior and increased uncertainty in the aviation sector (Gössling et al., 2021).

Therefore, this study is motivated by the increasing relevance of elderly passengers in the aviation industry. It aims to synthesize existing research by examining research methodologies, key variables, and research gaps in order to provide a foundation for future studies. The findings are expected to contribute to academic knowledge and offer practical implications for airline marketing and service design, particularly in the Thai aviation and tourism context.

Objectives

1. To analyze the research methodologies employed in prior studies.
2. To examine key variables commonly used in the literature.
3. To identify research gaps and areas requiring further investigation.

Research Questions

1. What research methodologies have been employed in previous studies on airline silver generation passengers?
2. What key variables have been commonly examined in the literature on airline silver generation passengers?
3. What research gaps and underexplored areas exist in studies of airline silver generation passengers?

Literature Review and Theory

Research synthesis is a fundamental process that enables scholars to systematically review existing studies and identify patterns, similarities, and research gaps (Kitchenham, 2004; Tranfield et al., 2003). In academic research, particularly in Thailand, it is often applied as a comparative approach to examine related studies and generate new insights (Cooper, 2017).

In the airline industry, previous studies have predominantly focused on service quality, passenger satisfaction, and behavioral intention using quantitative survey methods. While these studies provide valuable insights into general passenger behavior, they tend to emphasize broad customer segments rather than specific groups.

Research on silver generation passengers remains limited despite their growing importance and economic potential (World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2016). Moreover, existing studies have given limited attention to financial and psychological factors, such as risk perception and value sensitivity, which are important in decision-making.

Therefore, future research should develop more comprehensive models that integrate both service-related and financial factors to better explain airline selection behavior among the silver generation.

Methodology

In this research synthesis, the author conducted a systematic search using online academic databases and open-access sources, employing relevant keywords to identify studies published within the past ten years (2015–2025). The selected studies were drawn from reputable academic sources, including international journals and Thai indexed journals (TCI), ensuring the reliability and relevance of the data. This timeframe was chosen because research in consumer behavior and marketing evolves rapidly, and recent studies are more likely to reflect current variables, trends, and research gaps (Kitchenham, 2004; Tranfield et al., 2003).

The findings of this study are presented according to three research objectives. First, to analyze research methodologies, a summary table is provided to illustrate key methodological

aspects of the 18 selected studies, including sample characteristics, sampling techniques, and the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Second, to examine research variables, another table presents the most commonly used variables across the selected studies, such as demographic characteristics and consumer behavior factors. This enables the identification of dominant research themes in the existing literature.

Third, to identify research gaps, the study highlights underexplored topics that warrant further investigation, as well as commonly studied areas that may no longer require extensive replication. This synthesis provides a foundation for future research and supports the development of more meaningful and innovative studies.

Results

The findings of this study are presented in accordance with the three research objectives, covering research methodologies, key variables, and identified research gaps in the existing literature.

The results for Objective 1: Synthesis of Methodology are summarized in Table 1.

Study (Author, Year & Topic)	Quantitative (Sampling & Sample)	Qualitative (Source & Selection)
ACRP (2023) – Accessibility for elderly passengers	-	Report analysis (15 documents; selection based on accessibility policies)
Sun et al. (2021) – Post-COVID travel behavior	Secondary data	Industry datasets (air travel data; selection based on time-series relevance)
Suau-Sanchez et al. (2020) – Aviation crisis	Secondary data	Industry reports (global aviation data; purposive selection)
Halpern & Graham (2019) – Passenger experience	-	Secondary sources (airport reports; document analysis)
Tsaur & Yen (2018) – Service recovery	Convenience sampling (n=190 passengers; questionnaire)	-
Wu & Cheng (2018) – Passenger satisfaction	Random sampling (n=300 passengers; survey)	-
Seo & Park (2018) – Service quality	Convenience sampling (n=200 passengers; questionnaire)	-
Chen & Chang (2018) – Brand preference	Survey sampling (n=210 passengers; questionnaire)	-
Han & Hyun (2017) – Risk perception	Convenience sampling (n=210 passengers; questionnaire)	-
Chang & Chen (2017) – Elderly passenger needs	Convenience sampling (n=250 passengers; questionnaire)	-
Fodness & Murray (2017) – Passenger expectations	Survey sampling (n=200 passengers; questionnaire)	-

Poria et al. (2017) – Accessibility perception	Survey sampling (n=150 tourists; questionnaire)	-
Darcy & Dickson (2017) – Accessible travel	-	Conceptual study (literature synthesis; thematic selection)
Jiang & Zhang (2016) – Service dimensions	Convenience sampling (n=180 passengers; questionnaire)	-
Chen & Wu (2016) – Passenger loyalty	Convenience sampling (n=220 passengers; questionnaire)	-
Park et al. (2016) – Behavioral intention	Survey sampling (n=180 passengers; questionnaire)	-
UNWTO (2016) – Elderly tourism trends	-	Report analysis (global tourism reports; document selection criteria)
Kim et al. (2015) – Elderly travel behavior	Survey sampling (n=230 elderly; questionnaire)	-

Table 1 Synthesis of Methodology

The results from Objective 1 indicate that most studies employed quantitative approaches, particularly questionnaire-based surveys using convenience sampling. The samples largely consisted of general airline passengers, while studies focusing specifically on elderly passengers remain limited. In contrast, qualitative studies were relatively fewer and primarily relied on document analysis and secondary data, with limited use of interviews or other primary qualitative methods. In terms of data analysis, quantitative studies commonly applied statistical techniques such as regression analysis, structural equation modeling (SEM), and descriptive statistics. Meanwhile, qualitative studies predominantly utilized thematic analysis and content analysis to interpret data from documents and reports.

The results for Objective 2: Synthesis of Key Variables are summarized in Table 1.

Study (Author, Year & Topic)	Key Variables
ACRP (2023) – Accessibility	Accessibility, Service
Sun et al. (2021) – Post-COVID behavior	Risk perception, Travel intention
Suau-Sanchez et al. (2020) – Aviation crisis	Demand, Travel behavior
Halpern & Graham (2019) – Passenger experience	Experience, Satisfaction
Wu & Cheng (2018) – Passenger satisfaction	Service quality, Satisfaction
Seo & Park (2018) – Airline service quality	Service quality, Behavioral intention
Chen & Chang (2018) – Brand preference	Brand, Preference, Loyalty
Tsaur & Yen (2018) – Service recovery	Service quality, Satisfaction
Han & Hyun (2017) – Risk perception	Risk perception, Satisfaction
Chang & Chen (2017) – Elderly passenger needs	Service quality, Satisfaction, Elderly needs
Fodness & Murray (2017) – Passenger expectations	Expectations, Satisfaction
Poria et al. (2017) – Accessibility perception	Accessibility, Satisfaction
Darcy & Dickson (2017) – Accessible travel	Accessibility, Inclusion
Jiang & Zhang (2016) – Service dimensions	Service quality
Chen & Wu (2016) – Passenger loyalty	Satisfaction, Loyalty

Park et al. (2016) – Behavioral intention	Service quality, Behavioral intention
UNWTO (2016) – Elderly tourism	Demographics, Travel behavior
Kim et al. (2015) – Elderly travel behavior	Age, Income, Travel motivation

Table 2 Synthesis of Key Variables

For Objective 2, the findings indicate that most studies focused on service quality, satisfaction, and behavioral intention, while limited attention was given to financial and psychological factors such as risk perception and value sensitivity. In addition, personal factors such as age and income were considered in some studies, but not consistently across the literature.

The results for Objective 3: Research Gaps and Areas Requiring Further Investigation.

The findings reveal that research on silver generation passengers remains limited and underexplored, particularly due to challenges in data collection. Key gaps include the lack of integration between financial and psychological factors, such as risk perception and value sensitivity. Moreover, most studies focus on general passengers rather than elderly groups. Therefore, future research should specifically examine silver generation passengers to better understand their airline selection behavior.

In contrast, the findings also suggest that service quality, satisfaction, and behavioral intention have been extensively studied using similar quantitative approaches. Further research in these areas may provide limited new insights unless new perspectives or specific target groups, such as elderly passengers, are incorporated.

Conclusion

This study highlights that research on airline passenger behavior has mainly focused on service-related factors, with limited attention to elderly passengers and financial or psychological aspects. Future research should focus on the silver generation to provide deeper insights for airline marketing and service design.

Discussion and Recommendation

The findings are consistent with prior studies in tourism and passenger behavior, which emphasize service quality, satisfaction, and behavioral intention as key determinants of travel decisions (Kim et al., 2015; World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2016; Suau-Sanchez et al., 2020). Similar trends have also been identified in research synthesis studies, highlighting the dominance of quantitative approaches and recurring research themes (Kitchenham, 2004; Tranfield et al., 2003).

However, this study extends existing literature by identifying the underrepresentation of silver generation passengers and the limited integration of financial and psychological factors, such as risk perception and value sensitivity. Future research should develop more comprehensive models and adopt diverse methodologies, particularly qualitative approaches, to better understand elderly passengers. Practically, airlines should design age-friendly services and targeted marketing strategies to address this growing segment.

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